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AN
ORATION,
PRONOUNCED AT CHARLESTOWN,
JULY 4, 1797:
AT THE REQUEST OF THE
Selectmen, Artillery Company,
AND
Trustees OF THE School IN SAID Town,
IN
COMMEMORATION
OF THE
ANNIVERSARY
OF
American Independence.

o —  — o
By John Miller Russell.

CHARLESTOWN:
PRINTED BY J. LAMSON, AT HIS OFFICE
NEAR THE BRIDGE.

NOTATION

ANNOUNCED AT CHARLESTON

JULY 4, 1877

AT THE REQUEST OF THE

Seaboard Airline Company

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF THE

COMMEMORATION

5 47 20
ANNIVERSARY
1223.

American Independence



By J. H. Hill

CHARLESTON

PRINTED AT THE PRESS OF J. H. HILL

1877

*AT a meeting of the Selectmen, Trustees of the School,
and Artillery Company, of Charlestown, the 4th day
of July, Anno Domini, 1797.*

Noted,

THAT RICHARD DEVENS, Esquire,
Mr. JOHN CARTER, and Captain DAVID
GOODWIN, be a committee to wait on JOHN
MILLER RUSSELL, Esquire, and return him
their thanks for the ingenious ORATION this day
delivered, upon the Anniversary of the Independ-
ence of the UNITED STATES of AMERICA, and to
request of him a copy thereof for the Press.

—
Gentlemen,

IT is unnecessary for me to apologize for
gratifying my fellow citizens and townsmen, with a
copy of the ORATION, which, at their request, I
had the honour to pronounce on the 4th of JULY
1797, and which I now submit to their candid and
impartial perusal.

I am, Gentlemen, with respect,

Your most obedient humble servant,

John Miller Russell.

At a meeting of the Board of Directors, held at the
and at the City of New York, on the 1st day of
of the year 1880.

510125

THE RICHARD B. BENTLEY
MR. JAMES C. BENTLEY, and DAVID
GOODWIN, a committee to read and
MILLER, WHEELER, HARRIS, and others, and
and to the Board of Directors, on the 1st day of
of the year 1880, and to
the Board of Directors, on the 1st day of

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It is respectfully for me to express the
and to the Board of Directors, on the 1st day of
of the year 1880, which is hereby
and to the Board of Directors, on the 1st day of
of the year 1880, and to the Board of Directors, on the 1st day of

I am, Gentlemen, with respect,

Yours faithfully,
John A. B. Bentley



AN

ORATION, &c.



Cernes urbem & promissa Lavini

Mænia,

VIRGIL.

Le rempart le plus sûr d'un état, est la justice, la modération, la bonne foi, & l'assurance où sont vos voisins que vous êtes incapable d'usurper leurs terres.

TELEMAQUE.



FELLOW CITIZENS,

AND RESPECTED TOWNSMEN!

WE are convened to welcome in the annual Jubilee of our freedom. Hail, glorious returning *Æra*!—Birth day of a nation!—It was on this ever memorable epoch, that Liberty and Independence triumphed over tyrannic oppression and slavery, and with our choicest blood
laid

laid the foundation of a glorious temple of liberty on the spacious plains of America.

WE are assembled, my friends, not to boast, but to realize ; not to inflate our national vanity, by a pompous relation of past achievements in the council or in the field ; but from a modest retrospect of the truly dignified part already acted by our countrymen,—from an accurate view of our present situation, which is rendered peculiarly critical by an anticipation of the scenes which remain to be unfolded, to discern and familiarize the duties that still await us, as citizens, as soldiers, and as men.

ALLOW me, therefore, my fellow citizens, to leave to the unerring page of history to record, and to the sons of genius to celebrate, the matchless deeds achieved by the MAN who led our chosen bands of heroes through all the dubious scenes of war, till gloriously triumphant ; nor enjoin upon me the unpleasant and futile task of defending him, against the attacks of men who
have

have dared to wound him with arrows less formidable than those of Hercules, though dipped in the lake of Lerna. The Babel structure of his enemies shall tumble into ruin, and their sacrilegious attacks, like the evanescent phantoms of imagination, shall evaporate and be forgotten, while the unshaken monuments of his glory shall acquire strength by age.

His high deeds have opened the womb of fate, and given birth to a nation.

THE consequences of that event now demand our most serious attention. That it is yet to be determined whether that liberty and independence, purchased at such an immense expense, will prove a blessing or a curse, is a remarkable expression in the farewell legacy left us by WASHINGTON, the illustrious father and protector of his country. Notwithstanding the uninterrupted prosperity we have enjoyed for a few years past, may elevate our minds and extend our prospects, yet we should not be unmindful of the sort

of

of crisis to which the baneful effects of party rage has exposed us.

THE various parts of the United States are variously inclined—many causes have been assigned for that diversity of dispositions; among which we may reckon as the principal, in the catalogue of evils that have urged our country on to that crisis, the general neglect of public education and religion.

WHEN an American expresses his astonishment that public education is not more immediately the object of government, he will not be suspected of refusing his country that justice, which must, in his mind, be the result of a comparison with the state of education in other countries; if the evils created by it, animate him to wish for a better situation in his own. Such, my honoured friends, is the impression under which I now address you. In the reflections arising from a survey of other countries, the wretched state of public education, the evils flowing from it, the grateful

ful sensations produced by a comparison of the inhabitants of those countries and my own countrymen, convince me that superiour education alone can give us a superiority over other nations.

WHEN the anguish of British despotism, dying of its own excesses, called on the American people for remedies to so many evils ; when the voice of a whole nation demanded the eradication of every trace of its ancient slavery, it was in the national education that the reform was to begin ; it was through its channel that our political regeneration was to take place ; it was then we found that abuses formed a system, whose ramifications were intimately connected with the political existence of the citizens of America. It was then that successively we found, that to build a new constitution we were obliged to pull down an old one ; that a political machine, wanted, like all others, perfect and just dimensions in all its parts ; that the more perfect this beautiful edifice of our political compact was, the more dan-

gerous it would be to retain small defects in any of its parts.

Thus have the American people begun their task, with a collection of ruins: Our materials were the rubbish of ages; we have animated those inanimate remnants; and suddenly a constitution was organized and has already displayed an active force.

It does not comport with the duties of the day to treat political questions; nor will I trespass on your indulgence, by offering you any sentiments, unless we find in them a source of reflection which must be peculiarly grateful to Americans, arising from our past labours and our present conduct.

It has been a question, ever since the time of the three Persian Lords, Otanes, Megabyfes and Darius, who reduced to the *Democratical*, *Aristocratical* and *Monarchical*, the forms of government which each of them was desirous of inforcing

ing on Persia, which was the best of the three ? as if there could be no other. If we consider how many kinds of government have since that time been employed in various countries which are not comprised in this division, I believe we may safely conclude, that a nation may exist under any government, provided the people be *virtuous*, by the same principle that a man may live any where, on any food, provided he enjoy good health.

THE manners of nations are not less varied than those of individuals. Whole nations live in deserts, such as the Arabians and Tartars, others on the contrary never leave their Country, as the Chinese : Some spread themselves among strangers, as the Jews and Armenians, and others never communicate with any strangers, as the Japanese ; some assemble in vast multitudes in large cities, as polished nations ; others scatter themselves in families and live in *Hippas*, as the Islanders of New Zealand.

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THE Governments of men are not less different than their manners ; many countries have been happy under one King ; others have not been less so under two, as at Lacedemon : and it would perhaps be no very difficult task to find out some equally fortunate under a triumvirate.

WE are already so far removed from the ancient laws of nature by the laws of society, that it requires some degree of moral vigilance to observe that the ancient rights of men are unknown. Our opinions, our manners, our customs vary from year to year, and in driving us towards futurity, time is constantly employed in altering *our nature.*

THE origin of all governments was weak ; but we may observe, that those which received, since their establishment, any increase, or those that lost it after having acquired it, had only the power of one body in view ; such were the governments of Poland, Genoa, Venice, and Malta, which sacrificed

erificed the interest of their people to that of their nobility. We may observe on the contrary, that those states which have prospered, have always been those whose object was the interest and happiness of the people. Thus Lacedemon gave laws to Greece, and to a part of Asia. She would, like Rome, have ruled the whole world, had she but granted the name of citizens to the *Islanders*, who were her cultivators.

It was through the influence of the people, that Turkey became so famous for her conquests; China for her duration; Holland for her commerce; England for her maritime power and the cultivation of the sciences, and Switzerland, happier than all, for her liberty and the political harmony of her citizens.

BUT the most consolatory reflection to the friends of our present form of government is, that all those nations which have flourished, were governed, like us, by two opposite powers, and those which were destroyed, were ruled by one only

only, because nature forms her harmonies from contraries. There never was a government that had not a chief, whether he was named a Doge, a Bey, a King, a Pope, a Sultan, an Emir, an Emperor, or a Stadtholder, because all societies want a Moderator.

At Rome the power of the people was oppressed by that of the nobility, which was fortified in Sylla by that of the Dictature : But when Cæsar, after taking the part of the people, had assumed that Dictature himself, then the power of the nobility was in its turn oppressed. When the Emperors who succeeded him under a different name, instead of being the moderators of the people, had united in their persons, the consular and tribunitive powers, the empire was soon destroyed, because that the two powers which before balanced each other, being once fixed at the center, put a final stop to its motion. Thus we observe the functions of the human body paralysed, when the blood stops at the region of the heart, instead of equally circulating through all its parts.

It

It is in vain to expect, from a sense of our own weakness, to be able to give an immoveable basis to a government which constantly moves. Nature draws all her constant harmonies from moveable powers. The emblem of society, as well as that of justice, may be represented by a balance, the service of which wholly lies in the two beams. The *rest* of moving bodies lies in their equilibrium.

I SHALL conclude from these premises, that a government is flourishing and durable, when it is formed of two powers which balance each other; when it has a chief as a moderator, and when for its center it has the happiness of the people. These are the only means and the only ends, which can insure both the prosperity and duration of states, whether they be monarchical, aristocratical, or republican. Nor is this conclusion presumptuous; the history of all countries justifies it. It is not enough to quote a few years of prosperity to establish a political principle; nothing short of a series of
years

years of uninterrupted happiness of a country will enable us to judge of the goodness of its constitution, as we do not judge of that of a man by a few feats of activity or strength, but by a permanent and equal enjoyment of health.

NOTWITHSTANDING the political clouds which at the present time obscure the American horizon, let us hope that the guardian Angel of Columbia; the sincerity of our intentions; the purity of our motives; the liberality of the nation that assisted us in time of our distress; her natural disposition, when uninfluenced by American renegades, and the whole tribe of Anarchists; the interest of her own glory which will not allow her to throw away all that she has done for us, will, in preserving us from the dreadful effects of national contentions, enable us to realize the high destiny to which we are equally entitled, from the happy situation of our country, and the immutable principles of justice, gratitude, courage and moderation of her citizens.

